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Ex-Agent Says He Cannot Recall Giving Credentials to Spy Suspect

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LOS ANGELES, June 14 — Richard W. Miller admitted today that he told the authorities he had given his Federal Bureau of Investigation credentials to a Soviet woman accused of conspiring to spy with him. But he said he did not know whether he had actually given her the documents.

Mr. Miller, the first bureau agent ever accused of spying, testified that the woman, Svetlana Ogorodnikov, said she wanted to take the credentials to the Soviet consulate in San Francisco. He said she plied him with "cognac and margaritas" on their trip there in August, 1984, leaving his memory and judgment "clouded." Although he told investigators last September that he had handed over the credentials, he said today, "I don't know if it was true or not because I was very confused at the time."

Mr. Miller's testimony came in his fourth day as a prosecution witness at the trial in Federal District Court of Mrs. Ogorodnikov and her husband Nikolay, who are accused of conspiring with Mr. Miller to pass secret intelligence documents to the Soviet Union.

'Serious Breaches'

The prosecution has said that it hoped to obtain from Mr. Miller "truthful and greatly incriminating" testimony about Mrs. Ogorodnikov, the key defendant at this trial, but at the same time impeach his credibility regarding his own role in a purported conspiracy.

Assistant United States Attorney Bruce G. Merritt also questioned Mr. Miller about actions that the prosecutor described as "serious breaches" of Mr. Miller's responsibilities as an agent.

Mr. Miller several times excused his actions by saying that he was "confused" and "bewildered."

"I've got a good forgetter," he said, referring to his faulty memory.

He said that he had been "just going with the flow," when he accompanied Mrs. Ogorodnikov to San Francisco, where she visited the Soviet Consulate and, prosecutors contend, triumphantly showed Soviet officials that she had the credentials and the cooperation of an American agent.

Mr. Miller has denied that he was spying and testified today that he went along with Mrs. Ogorodnikov on the trip to continue efforts to recruit her to work for the bureau.

He testified that she carried some film canisters on the drive to San Francisco and told him that such canisters were sometimes used to take "other things" into the consulate. Mr. Miller conceded he had had an opportunity to look into the canisters while the couple stayed overnight in a motel in Lost Hills, Calif. But he did not, he said, because "I'm not that good of a spy. I was afraid I'd get caught."

Mr. Miller testified that he was shocked to learn from Mrs. Ogorodnikov that she had told consulate officials about him. "I got really crazy and was very upset — I just fell apart," he said. Later, after staying over at another motel on their return to Los Angeles, he said she told him that they had been photographed together in their motel room by Russian agents. After that he counted up his series of unfortunate mistakes, he said, and he realized "I had been totally and completely compromised."

Mr. Miller times characterized Mrs. Ogorodnikov several times as acting "drunk and crazy." Mr. Merritt accused Mr. Miller of tailoring his testimony to assist Mrs. Ogorodnikov, a charge Mr. Miller denied.

Mr. Miller has been given immunity for his testimony at the Ogorodnikovs' trial. His own trial was tentatively scheduled today to begin Aug. 6.

Change in Statements

The jury was shown the former agent's credentials, a black leather wallet with an F.B.I. badge and identification cards in it. Mr. Miller agreed with Mr. Merritt that if an F.B.I. agent ever discussed giving his credentials to someone he believed was going to meet with Soviet officials, he would "remember it to his dying day."

Mr. Miller reminded Mr. Merritt that he had first denied to F.B.I. investigators that he had relinquished the credentials and said he made his later admission only because "They wore

me out, they beat me down." Mr. Merritt suggested that it was the unfavorable results of a polygraph test that made Mr. Miller change his statements.

The Government has charged that Mr. Miller was to be paid \$50,000 in gold and \$10,000 in cash to furnish documents for the Soviet intelligence service, the K.G.B. Mr. Miller testified that Mrs. Ogorodnikov had taken him to her apartment in Hollywood where she introduced him to a man she identified as "Nikolay Wolfson," a paymaster for the K.G.B. who would discuss payment with him. Mr. Miller said he later learned that "Mr. Wolfson" was Mrs. Ogorodnikov's husband. He said he did most of the talking and that "Mr. Wolfson" said barely 10 words.

Mr. Miller said he went through with the meeting to further his objective of infiltrating a K.G.B. network, a feat never before accomplished by the F.B.I. He acknowledged that he had asked to have the gold placed in three safety deposit boxes in three different banks, but said this was to further his objective.

"The thrust of getting the money was not to provide information" to the Soviet Union, he said, "but to meet somebody" higher up in Soviet intelligence.